



ONYCHOPRION FULIGINOSUS?

Sooty Tern.

Noddy, Damp. Voy., vol. iii. part i. p. 142. pl. in p. 123. fig. 5.—Hawkesb. Voy., vol. iii. p. 652.

Sterna serrata, Forst. Draw., t. 110.

—— *guttata*, Forst.

—— *Oahuensis*, Bloxam.

Onychoprion serratus, Wagl.—G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd edit., p. 100.

ALTHOUGH I retain the term *fuliginosus* for this bird, which exhibits some trivial differences from the species so called inhabiting the northern hemisphere, I have reasons for considering it to be distinct, and that, as in many other instances, the two birds are representatives of each other; and I think we are the more bound to consider them to be so, when we find that the incubation of these birds in the two hemispheres takes place at opposite periods; Mr. Gilbert found this bird breeding on the Houtman's Abrolhos, off the western coast of Australia, in the month of December, while M. Audubon found the *fuliginosus* breeding on the Tortugas, in North America, in May.

Mr. Gilbert states, that it "lays a single egg on the bare ground beneath the thick scrub; and that the egg varies considerably in colour. The breeding-season is at its height in December, but a few may be found performing the task of incubation in January. So reluctant is it to leave its egg or young, that it will suffer itself to be taken by hand rather than desert them. For several weeks after the young are able to fly, this bird may be seen in vast flocks soaring at a great height. It is an extremely noisy species, and may be heard on the wing during all hours of the night."

The ground colour of the eggs is a creamy white, in some very pale, in others very rich, blotched all over with irregular-sized markings of chestnut and dark brown, the latter hue appearing as if beneath the surface; the lighter-coloured eggs have these markings much smaller and more thinly dispersed, except at the larger end; they are two inches and an eighth long by one inch and a half in breadth.

Lores, crown of the head and back of the neck deep black; all the upper surface, wings and tail deep sooty black; the apical half, the shaft and the outer web of the lateral tail-feathers white; a V-shaped mark on the forehead and all the under surface of the wings and body white, passing into grey on the lower part of the abdomen and under tail-coverts; irides dark brown; bill black; feet brownish black.

The young have the entire plumage of a sooty brown, with a bar of white at the tip of each of the feathers of the back, wings and upper tail-coverts.

The figures represent a male and a female of the natural size.